UNITED NATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS SECTION

DPI/NGO/SB/90/30

THE REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY AND OF YEMEN AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NEW WORLD ORDER

(Not an official record or press release. This summary is made available to NGO representatives for their information and free dissemination.)

On 1 November, 1990, Ambassador Abdalla Saleh Al-Ashtal, Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations; Ambassador Hans Bräutigam, Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations; and Mr. Victor Sukhodrev, Special Assistant to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, briefed NGO representatives on the reunification of Germany and of Yemen.

Yemen was admitted to membership in the United Nations on 30 September 1947 and Democratic Yemen on 14 December 1967. On 22 May 1990, the two countries merged to form a single State, the Republic of Yemen.

The Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic were both admitted to membership in the United Nations on 18 September 1973. With effect from 3 October 1990, the two countries united to form the sovereign state of Germany.

Mr. Al-Ashtal began by observing that the old bi-polar system of international relations was collapsing and giving way to a new world order that had not yet been fully defined. It was the arrival of this new world order which had served as a catalyst for the reunification of Yemen.

In May 1989, North and South Yemen were on the brink of military confrontation because of territorial disputes in an area rich in oil, Mr. Al-Ashtal explained. It was only through intense diplomatic dialogue between the leaders of Yemen, that confrontation was averted and a new agreement had evolved. This agreement was based on mutual co-operation between oil exporters in that area and led to full-scale economic integration.

The division of Yemen, unlike that of Germany, was not a consequence of the Second World War, nor were the two states of Yemen members of antagonistic political or military alliances. Rather the division of Yemen resulted from colonial rule, according to Mr. Al-Ashtal. Both states of Yemen had been members of the Arab League, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Islamic Conference. However, the political orientation of the two Yemen states differed. North Yemen was more capitalist and oriented toward the West, while South Yemen was more socialist and closer to the Eastern bloc.

Even so, two important factors bridged the political and economic differences of the two Yemen states, Mr. Al-Ashtal said:

(1) All Yemen is economically under-developed, to the extent that notions of capitalism and socialism are irrelevant.

(2) Yemen unity has been the most popular demand of all Yemenese people. As soon as the cold war gave way to constructive dialogue, the unification of Yemen was imminent.

Implications of Yemen Unity on the New World Order

Two lessons can be drawn from the unification of Yemen, Mr. Al-Ashtal said. First, the use of force only leads to disintegration, not unity. Military action had been instigated in the past by both North and South Yemen, in 1972 and 1979, respectively. Unity could only be attained peacefully, through dialogue and compromise.

The second lesson is that now, in the post-cold war era, economic problems and needs of developing countries should draw them together. Because Europe is furthering its economic and political integration, the developing countries of the south have no alternative other than to do the same, Mr. Al-Ashtal said.

Democratization through Unity

In Yemen and in Germany, democratization was achieved through unification. In the case of Yemen, constitutions of both the North and South had been suspended and superceded by a new constitution, one based on democratic values and the legal attributes of a modern state, Mr. Al-Ashtal said.

Mr. Bräutigam, of Germany, noted that unity is part of the democratic process, and that German unification resulted from three factors:

(1) German unification was the result of a non-violent, pro-democracy movement against communism in the German Democratic Republic.

(2) Soviet policy in Europe had undergone a fundamental change. It was now a policy of non-intervention and respect for the self-determination of the peoples of Eastern Europe. There was a new Soviet interest in regional, political and economical cooperation with Western European countries on an equal basis: a new international order based on economic and social cooperation, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.

(3) Strong international support existed for the unification of Germany. According to Mr. Bräutigam, this reflected the trust of the international community in German policy after the war, and helped ensure that Germany's unification occurred in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Stages of the unification of Germany

Mr. Bräutigam described three stages of German unification:

March 1990 — Free elections were held in East Germany for the first time; an overwhelming majority calling for the unification of Germany as soon as possible.

July 1990 — Economic union was established between East and West Germany, the first important step towards transforming the East German economy from a planned socialist system to a free market economy.

Oct. 1990 — Final political unification took place on 3 October, through the accession of the German Democratic Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany. This occurred after ratification of unity by the two German parliaments.

Mr. Bräutigam said that the accession of the German Democratic Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany was the most practical way of unifying Germany. The Federal Republic of Germany was hesitant to reunify so expediently, he said; ideally, unification would have followed elections for a constitutional assembly and the ratification of a new German constitution. However, East Germany could not be maintained for so long, and it was the desire of the East German people to unify as quickly as possible. German unification thus occurred as a democratic expression of self-determination, Mr. Bräutigam said.

Mr. Bräutigam said that the most significant and visible effects of German unification on international politics were in Europe. Germany would remain a member of the European Community and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Germany would use its influence to further the economic and political integration of Europe, and it would strive for close association with its eastern neighbours.

Another concern of Germany is the disarmament of conventional and nuclear forces in Europe. Germany would also seek to encourage cooperation within the framework of the Conference on Cooperation and Security in Europe (CSCE).

Germany's commitment to international peace and security

Mr. Bräutigam expressed Germany's commitment to helping ensure international peace and security. Germany had contributed to peace-keeping in Central America and Namibia. A proposed constitutional amendment would allow Germany to take a more active role in peace-keeping. He lauded Liechenstein's recent membership in the United Nations and noted Yemen's recent presidency of the Security Council. The United Nations had a unique commitment to protect small countries, he said.

READEX FICHE

Mr. Bräutigam said that the unification of Germany had not made it a superpower. Germany has neither the political ambition, military resources or the desire to acquire that status. He said that Germany as a superpower may be a fear or an illusion but not a reality. This understanding would become the basis of its future policies. German youth were concerned with environmental issues and human rights, he added. Mr. Bräutigam concluded by observing that the international community must follow a value system that excludes war.

Peaceful unification is a model for a new world order

Mr. Sukhodrev said that, from the viewpoint of the United Nations, the peaceful unification of Yemen and Germany gave very powerful expression to a cardinal principle of the United Nations Charter: the self-determination of peoples. Peaceful unification provided a shining example of international co-operation, especially against the backdrop of the tragedy of Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

Germany could not have been reunited if it had not been for the demise of the cold war, Mr. Sukhodrev said. German unification has brought about great changes in the military, strategic and political situation of Europe.

Mr. Sukhodrev said that in accordance with the treaty relating to Germany's unification, signed in Moscow on 12 September 1990, foreign troops would be withdrawn from direct contact, thus ending military stand-off in Europe. Germany had committed itself to reducing its armed forces to 370,000 troops. The eastern part of Germany would have a special military and political status, with no foreign armed forces or nuclear weapons deployed there.

The political institutions of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) would develop to ensure stability and predictability in Europe. Mr. Sukhodrev said that the CSCE would hold regular consultations, and its institutions would include crisis-prevention centres, a permanent secretariat and a parliamentary assembly.

Mr. Sukhodrev concluded by observing that these events marked the end of cold war confrontation, and the begining of a new era based on civilized relations of trust, cooperation and partnership. This may become the model for a new world order based on freedom of choice and balance of interests, openness, political realities and a shared commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.